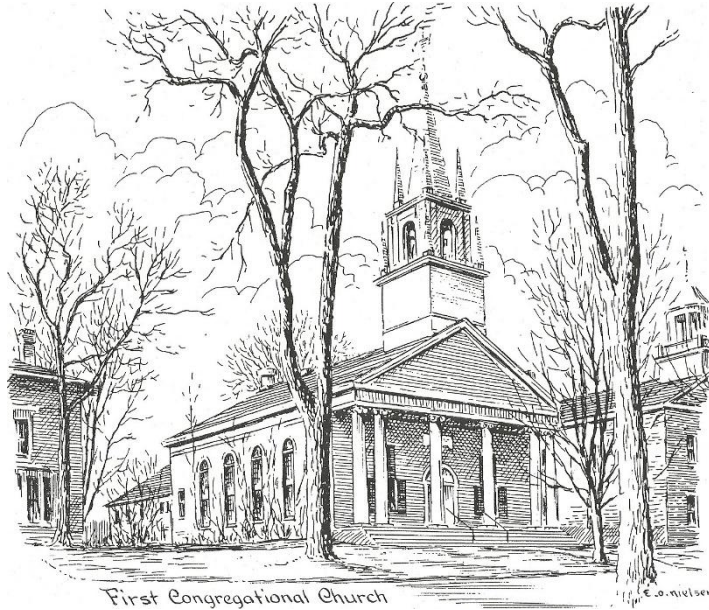


First Congregational Church
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
An Open and Affirming Church



We welcome you to the First Congregational Church of Wiscasset.

VISION: We are on a journey to reflect God's love, embracing diversity and affirming the dignity and worth of all.

MISSION: Together we strive to praise God, grow in faith, cultivate love, spread joy, care for all people and God's creation, promote peace, and do justice.

February 15, 2026

Transfiguration Sunday

We welcome all to our worship service, whether present in the sanctuary, joining us on streaming video, or watching our service in the future.

Spiritual Contemplation Quote for the week: “Christianity does not give solutions, but does give light by which to seek them.”

PRELUDE

Lux

Aeterna

Julias Mariás

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

* CALL TO WORSHIP

L: It is good to be here in this sacred space,

P: in the shelter of God’s love and hope.

L: It is good to be here with folks we know well, as well as with new friends,

P: joining with all of God’s beloved, siblings of Jesus.

L: It is good to be here, where we can hear God’s voice,

P: calling us to be eyewitnesses to the Spirit’s presence.

* OPENING HYMN

‘Love Divine, All Loves Excelling’

No. 404

INVOCATION TO PRAYER

DAZZLING BOUQUET (refrain)

Mine is the church where everybody’s welcome.

I know it’s true ’cause I got through the door.

We are a dazzling bouquet of every kind of flower.

Jump in the vase, ’cause we’ve got space for more.

SPIRITUAL NUGGET

THUNDER

JOYS AND CONCERNS: After each Joy or Concern, Please respond:

Pastor: “God,” Congregation: **“Hear our prayer.”**

LIGHTING OF THE PEACE CANDLE

Global Mission Partner Prayer this week: Honduras

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Matthew 17:1-9

Liturgist: This is the Word of God. People: **Thanks be to God.**

* HYMN

“God of Grace and God of Glory”

No.477

SERMON

“Mountaintop Moments and Muddy Boots”

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

What Wonderous Love Is This?

* PRESENTATION WITH THE DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God for all that love has done;

Creator, Christ, and Spirit One. Amen.

* DEDICATION PRAYER

* CLOSING HYMN

‘Jesu, Jesu’

No.459

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTORY RESPONSE

Go now in peace. Never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of every day.

Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know God will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love, and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see.

God will be there watching from above. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.

POSTLUDE

Closer Walk with Thee

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

* * * * *

“Our worship ends, let our service begin”

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Minister and Teacher: Rev. John Hogue

Music Director: Joel Pierce

Those serving you today:

Ushers: Deanne Attwood & Susan Attwood

Reader: Martha Speed

Flowers: Ron Sanchez

Online Streaming: Angie Eddy

Please join us for fellowship, coffee or tea, and refreshments in Fellowship Hall following worship.

Please take note of the colored paper prayer slips in the pew rack. These are for you to write a word or phrase of prayer or concerns. Fold it and place it in the offering plate. It will only be shared with Rev. John.

Happy February Birthday to Tom Beane, Laura Downing and Sally Howe

Help Yourself Shelf Wish List

* jarred spaghetti sauce * 1lb. white rice * drink mixes * canned chicken * tuna *
* cereal * SPAM * mayo * baked beans * toothpaste * dish soap * cat litter *

Youth Group Food/Pet Food Drive

The Youth Group is leading a food and pet food drive for the month of February. All donations will go to support our neighbors at the Help Yourself Shelf. Items can be brought in throughout the month and put in the box in Fellowship hall.

Shining the Light of Christ
FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH
in the Heart of Wiscasset

Matthew 17:1-9

The Transfiguration

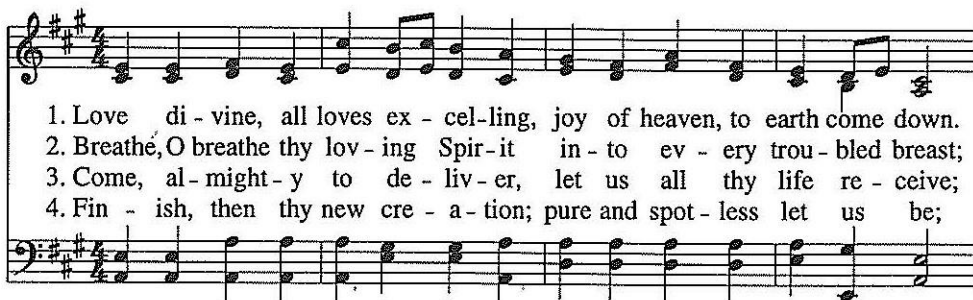
Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

New Revised Standard Version Updated Version

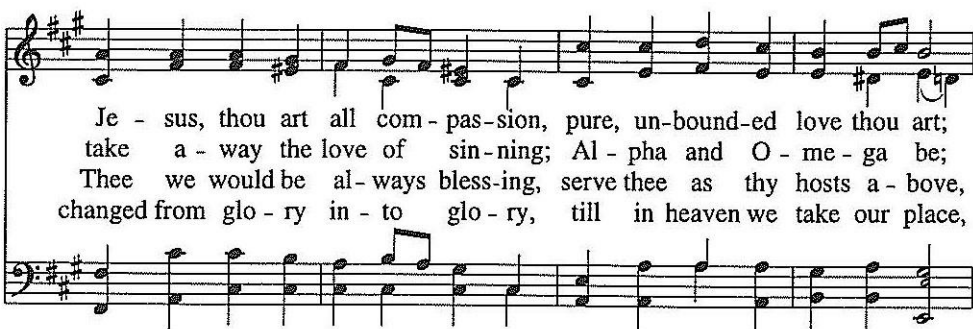
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling



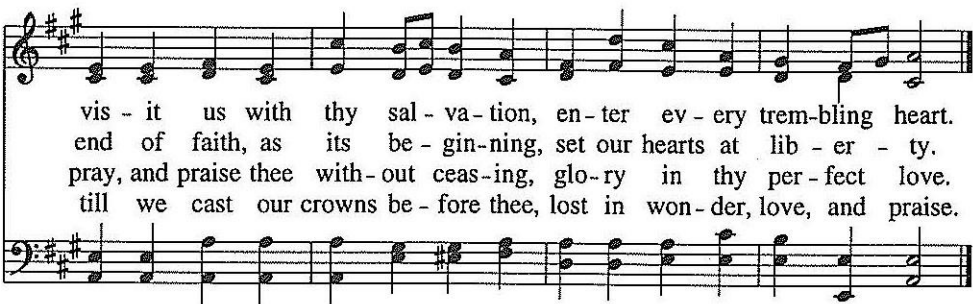
1. Love di - vine, all loves ex - cel - ling, joy of heaven, to earth come down.
 2. Breathe, O breathe thy lov - ing Spir - it in - to ev - ery trou - bled breast;
 3. Come, al - might - y to de - liv - er, let us all thy life re - ceive;
 4. Fin - ish, then thy new cre - a - tion; pure and spot - less let us be;



fix in us thy hum - ble dwell - ing, all thy faith - ful mer - cies crown;
 let us all in thee in - her - it, let us find thy prom - ised rest;
 sud - den - ly re - turn, and nev - er, nev - er - more thy tem - ples leave.
 let us see thy great sal - va - tion per - fect - ly re - stored in thee;



Je - sus, thou art all com - pas - sion, pure, un - bound - ed love thou art;
 take a - way the love of sin - ning; Al - pha and O - me - ga be;
 Thee we would be al - ways bless - ing, serve thee as thy hosts a - bove,
 changed from glo - ry in - to glo - ry, till in heaven we take our place,



vis - it us with thy sal - va - tion, en - ter ev - ery trem - bling heart.
 end of faith, as its be - gin - ning, set our hearts at lib - er - ty.
 pray, and praise thee with - out ceas - ing, glo - ry in thy per - fect love.
 till we cast our crowns be - fore thee, lost in won - der, love, and praise.

WORDS: Charles Wesley, 1747, alt.
 MUSIC: John Zundel, 1855

BEECHER
 87.87D

1. God of grace and God of glo - ry, on your peo - ple
 2. Lo! the hosts of e - vil round us scorn your Christ, as -
 3. Cure your chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness; bend our pride to
 4. Save us from weak res - ig - na - tion to the e - vils

pour your power; now ful - fill your church's sto - ry; bring its bud to
 sail his ways! From the fears that long have bound us, free our hearts to
 your con - trol; shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness, rich in things and
 we de - plore; let the search for your sal - va - tion be our glo - ry

glo - rious flower. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
 faith and praise. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
 poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
 ev - er - more. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,

for the fac - ing of this hour, for the fac - ing of this hour.
 for the liv - ing of these days, for the liv - ing of these days.
 lest we miss your heav'n - ly goal, lest we miss your heav'n - ly goal.
 serv - ing you whom we a - dore, serv - ing you whom we a - dore.

Refrain (Unison)

Je - su, Je - su, fill us with your love, show

Fine

us how to serve the neigh-bors we have from you.

1. Kneels at the feet of his friends, si - lent - ly wash - es their
 2. Neigh - bors are wealth - y and poor, var - ied in col - or and
 3. These are the ones we would love, these are the ones we would
 4. Lov - ing puts us on our knees, thank - ful and hum - ble and

D.C.

feet, Je - sus, our broth - er, a hum - ble man.
 race; neigh - bors are near and far a - way.
 serve; all these are neigh - bors, your child - ren, too.
 true; this is the way we would live with you.

WORDS: Tom Colvin, 1969, alt.

MUSIC: Ghanaian folk song; arr. Tom Colvin, 1969; harm. Charles H. Webb, 1988

CHEREPONI

Irr. w. refrain

This text was written for a meeting of evangelists at Chereponi, Ghana, and translated by Church of Scotland missionary Tom Colvin. The Ghanaian folk tune was collected in the Chereponi area.

Words, music © 1969,
 harm. © 1989 Hope Publishing Co.

February 15, 2026

This Sunday I want to begin with a historical footnote about Jesus' transfiguration. The story of the transfiguration also appears on another day in the Christian calendar, August 6. Why on this date? History informs us that on August 6, 1456 was the day the news of the victory of the crusaders, which in my opinion marked terrible savage and brutal killings in the name of God, but the news was the victory over the Turks. Pope Callixtus III declared this day the Feast Day of the Transfiguration, adopted by most Christian churches ever since. However later in History, August 6 is also the day we Americans dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. The dazzling, blinding light of the blast followed by an overshadowing cloud. Eerily like the description in the Gospel stories. A chilling coincidence.

We hear that the disciples were terrified by this dazzling light and overshadowing cloud. Theologian Rudolf Otto and his work, "*The Idea of the Holy*." Otto identifies three characteristics of the holy, the sacred: The holy is beyond what we can know that is mystery, not of our making or control, thereby terrifying, alluring, compelling, and attracting. If we are honest with ourselves, the deepest realities of life cannot be completely understood with our intellect. However, that doesn't mean they should be rejected. There are, for instance, "everyday mysteries," such as the marvel of being alive, the portal of Death, and relationships with beloved humans and pets. Then there is God, the mystery of mysteries. In his book, *Naming the Unnameable*, Matthew Fox says: What mystery is is very shy around words and namings. Mystery does not want to be named. It wishes to remain hidden. The uniqueness of the

Divine, the immensity of the Divine, renders it a great mystery that may well be without any name.

Yet, let us try to dive into our modern day and imagine Jesus doesn't take Peter, James, and John up a mountain in Galilee. He takes them up Mount Katahdin—or maybe just one of those steep, rock-scramble trails where you promise God you'll start stretching more if you make it to the top. It's early morning. The trail is quiet except for wind in the spruce and the crunch of boots on frost. The disciples are tired, a little cranky, and wondering why this couldn't have been a flat walk. That already feels very Maine. Then—just as the fog begins to lift—everything changes. The light breaks through. Not a gentle Hallmark glow, but that sharp, sudden Maine sunlight that makes the whole world feel newly washed. Jesus isn't just their hiking buddy anymore. He's radiant. Clear. Solid as granite and bright as the ocean on a good day. For a moment, Peter, James, and John see him for who he really is. Like any good Mainer faced with something overwhelming, Peter says the most practical thing he can think of: "Let's build something." A shelter. A camp. A way to stay here.

Because that's what we do in Maine when something feels holy—we try to mark it. We put a bench on the overlook. We name the spot. We take a photo and say, "This is one of those places." But the voice comes—clear as thunder over Penobscot Bay: "This is my Son. Listen to him." Not build. Not capture. Listen. Then, just as fast as it came, the moment passes. The light fades. The trail goes back to being rocky and uneven. And Jesus says the hardest thing of all: "We're going back down." Because faith isn't meant to live only on mountaintops. In Maine, we know this truth deep in

our bones. The mountain views are breathtaking—but you can't live up there. Life happens back in the towns and harbors. In places with weathered houses, working docks, aging churches, and people who are tired but faithful.

The Transfiguration is that rare moment when the fog lifts and we see clearly—when God reminds us who Jesus is, and who we are becoming. Not so we can escape the world, but so we can return to it changed.

Carrying the light with us—into muddy boots, long winters, hard conversations, and ordinary Tuesdays. In Maine we have the mud season coming up and believe me the back dirt roads of Weld, Rangely, Phillips and New Vineyard can be a challenge.

Because sometimes, even in Maine, the glory shows up. When it does, it's not there to keep us on the mountain—it's there to give us courage to go back down and live like we've seen the light.

There are many thoughts we can take from this story and weave into a narrative for our journey at this time in our lives. Some things I am thinking about: We are lit from within. What must I do to kindle that fire? We live in mystery, in a "cloud of unknowing." Can I live comfortably with that? There are moments we glimpse the holy, the sacred. Kiss them as they fly. What kind of transformation do I need to undergo to claim with Mary Oliver, "When death comes I want to be a bride married to amazement, a bridegroom taking the world into my arms." I asked the Council last Wednesday to produce Vitality days for our congregation. I want to see the

church transfigured in worship, stewardship, Evangelism and church renewal. I am looking for a few people to help me put these ideas into fruition. Do you have the fire in your soul and want to see the place thrive? I do. So I ask you: Is God calling you to this vital and critical calling?

Turning back to the Transfiguration story is wonderful and evocative. Descriptive and diagnostic. We have heard folks talk about the historical church on the hill. Yet it is the people who make the church. God forbid but what if the unspeakable happens and our beloved building is gone, what will endure? Relationships—that is what will endure.

Jesus takes three of his dearest friends onto that mountain with him. And although much maligned by Matthew and in the other Gospels, in the end his friends come through—in this story, in the garden at Gethsemane, and even immediately following the resurrection. Peter becomes the foundation of the church. James is the first of the disciples to die a martyr. John is entrusted with the care of Jesus' own mother. That is relationships.

So it is for us as well. We walk through this life together, sometimes looking out from the mountaintop and at other times groping for one another in the darkness of the valley. We don't always get it right. We don't always get along. Sometimes we argue about the wrong things. Sometimes we agree on the right things. But in the end we know that it's the relationships that make us better, our hearts fuller, and our faith stronger. Yet I know one thing that truly matters above all and that is relationships with kindness. Allow me to illustrate:

In 1974, three school friends in their late teens, without a plan, decided to backpack around Tasmania in the middle of winter. It was “bone-chilling cold and constant drizzle.” They decided to try to hitchhike to their next destination, and loitered in front of houses in the outskirts of town to look for a ride. They waited for hours “when a young boy came out of a neat cottage with a basket. He said his mum thought we might like something to eat and drink. In the basket was a Thermos of tea, mugs and a container with some cake and biscuits. It was a balm on that freezing cold day.” All these years later, they remembered that kindness. “It showed the writer that most people are good and want to look out for their fellow human being. Eventually the drizzle stopped and we got our ride, but I’ve never forgotten the kindness of that stranger.”

In our fragile and divisive world, how I remember with gratitude, Elie Wiesel. He survived the World War II Nazi concentration camp of Buchenwald and the death camp of Auschwitz. After liberation, he lived in France, Israel and the United States, where he advocated on behalf of victims of hate and persecution around the world. He died in 2016, at the age of 87. Wiesel dedicated his life to the fight against all hatred, and for the affirmation that every man and woman carries with them dignity, formed in the image of God.

During his life, Wiesel was called a messenger of peace, a humanitarian and a survivor. When asked, he liked to call himself simply, “a witness”. And as a witness, Wiesel said, it was his duty to never let those who suffered be forgotten.

"Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented," he said. "Sometimes we must interfere."

I am a witness. You are a witness. As a witness, I choose to pay attention while I am here. In a world that rewards "dog eat dog", I choose mercy. In a world where demeaning someone is applauded, I choose to honor dignity. In a world where exclusion is real, I choose the Gospel: "You belong. Your humanity is not up for negotiation. Your presence does not require anyone's permission." I choose to be a witness. Yes. I can choose to show up now. Bravely, both strong, and tender.

What does this look like? Oh, it's the little gifts my friends. It makes a big difference to hug the hurt. To kiss the broken. To bandage the wounded. To befriend the lost. To love the lonely. To listen, making room for sadness. To grieve. To stand up for the humiliated, and the degraded. To honor the dignity in every human. "I see you." To say Yes, to little gifts of compassion, connection, dignity, empathy, kindness, generosity, and peace that leave people better than we find them. To say No, to cruelty, and mercilessness.

When people learn that I am a minister, they're often curious to ask what I "believe". They can't help themselves. Okay, here you go in a theological snapshot. God has a heart for those who are left out, forgotten, and excluded. God's grace is bigger than anything which distances, separates and wounds us. You are God's beloved child, and God's love for you is unconditional. Caring for others, well, that

is music worth singing. And it is the music of Grace. What do I “believe”? Bottom line? I want to be like Jesus. Yes, Jesus, who sat with prostitutes and lepers (the “least of these”), and kept company with the outcasts and the downtrodden. The light we share is born in the broken places. Which means that being a witness goes hand in glove with renewal.

Allow me to paint a true illustration of renewal and transfiguration—
For most of the 20th century, Millinocket knew exactly who it was. Paper mill town. Shift whistles. Paychecks tied to one massive building by the river. Then the mill closed.

When it did, it wasn’t just jobs that disappeared—it was identity. Downtown emptied. Schools shrank. Houses sat dark. People who stayed learned to brace themselves for phrases like “dying town” and “nothing left there. “If you’ve ever driven through a place like that, you know the feeling. The lights are on—but dim.

For years, nothing dramatic happened. No miracle. No rescue investor. Just long winters and stubborn people. Then something began to change—but not the way anyone expected. Instead of trying to resurrect the past, a handful of residents began asking a different question: What if our future isn’t behind us? They looked north—toward the woods, the rivers, the vastness surrounding them. They started talking about trails, outdoor guides, local businesses, artists, small cafés. Not replacing what was lost—but becoming something new.

When Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument was designated in 2016, it didn't magically fix everything. But it did something just as powerful. It changed how people saw the town. Suddenly, Millinocket wasn't a place you passed through—it was a place you came to. Not polished. Not perfect. But alive. New storefronts opened next to boarded-up ones. Murals appeared. Young families moved back. Longtime residents discovered that the town they loved still had a future—just not the one they expected.

Millinocket didn't glow on a mountaintop. It changed in plain sight. In the Gospel story, the disciples don't learn new information on the mountain. They see differently. That's what happened in Millinocket. The town didn't become something else. It became more truly itself. The same land. The same people, but seen through new light. Transfiguration isn't about erasing scars. Millinocket still carries them. It's about discovering that what looked like an ending was actually a beginning still learning how to speak.

We all want to camp out in mountaintop moments. But Jesus leads them back down the mountain—because glory isn't meant to be hoarded; it's meant to be carried. Everyone who decides that cultivating peace and kindness within themselves matters. One step becomes two. Two become a thousand. A thousand become countless. And slowly, gently, persistently — not through grand gestures but through ten thousand small acts of love — we can help make the world more peaceful.

This is our hope. This is our offering. This is why we are the church.

Onward together, my friends.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Reminder: Rev. John is having a Lord's Prayer Lenten study on 2/25. He will be providing soup that evening, and the consensus is to begin dinner at 5:30, followed by the study. There is no book, no homework, no preparation- just bring yourself and join in conversation and reflection.

Feb. 15: Congregational Care meeting 11:30 in the parlor to discuss the new CC team bylaw statement, and discuss a plan/idea moving forward for 2026

Feb. 19: Rev. John will be attending Advanced Boundary Training- AI: Dangers and Moral Consequences

Coming Up This Week

Monday, February 16

Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Mah Jongg 3:00 – 5:30pm

Tuesday, February 17

Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm

Office Hours 9:30am – 1:30pm

Sheepscot Valley Chorus 7:00 – 9:00pm

Wednesday, February 18

Rev. John's Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm

Office Hours 10:00am – 2:00pm

Organ Society 9:30am

Feed Our Scholars packing 11:00am

Disposition of Ashes Drive-Thru 12:00-1:00pm

Ash Wednesday Service with St. Philips 7:00pm

Sunday, February 22

Sunday Worship 10:00am

Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following Worship

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